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CHALLENGE

FIGHT FOR COMMUNISM · LUCHE POR EL COMUNISMO · PLP

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CHICAGO KKKOPS KILL HARITH

WORKERS REBEL

CHICAGO, July 14—Screams and chants filled the air—along with bottles and debris—as workers from the South Shore neighborhood rebelled after the Chicago Police Department's racist killing of Harith "Snoop" Augustus, a 37-year-old barber and father of a five-year-old daughter.

Harith was stopped by police for "exhibiting characteristics of an armed person." CPD body cam footage shows Harith talking to a cop on the sidewalk. According to a witness interviewed by the Chicago Sun-Times, they were arguing over whether Harith was selling loose cigarettes. As the dispute escalated, a swarm of cops descended upon Harith. One grabbed his wrist. When Harith pulled away, his holstered weapon was revealed. He began running into the street and stumbled as Chicago's killer cops opened fire and shot him in the back.

It's the same old capitalist story: Chicago police murdered Harith Augustus.

This is the second racist murder of a young Black worker and father at the hands of the CPD in as many months. On June 6, in the Bronzeville neighborhood, the cops cut down 24-year-old Maurice Granton, shooting him six times in the back. Both Bronzeville and South Shore are historically Black neighborhoods on Chicago's South Side. They are being rapidly gentrified amid development in nearby Jackson Park of the Obama Presidential Center, a three-building complex including a library and museum. The Obama Foundation has refused to sign a Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) that would bar displacement of longtime community residents because of the development. Barack Obama himself has been silent about these latest racist murders in his adopted hometown.

The South Shore rebellion ignited almost immediately after Harith was murdered. Police swarmed the neighborhood to try to intimidate the working class. But the workers didn't back down. In the resulting standoff, the CPD attacked unarmed workers and activists with batons. The cops arrested four activists, primarily from the Black Youth Project 100 (BYP100), an organization founded shortly after the murder of Trayvon Martin in Florida in 2012. Incubated at the University of Chicago and funded by the Ford Foundation, two elite institutions of the U.S. ruling class, BYP100 began as a research project to examine "the attitudes, resources, and culture of African American youth ages 15 to 25" in regard to civic engagement (blackyouthproject.com). The bosses' nonprofit reform groups can never be revolutionary organizations dedicated to the liberation of the working class. Progressive Labor Party is the tool of the working class to liberate ourselves from the noose of capitalism.

After the arrests, BYP100 correctly called on everyone to march to the police station where the four people were being held, the same station where the cop who murdered Harith is based. About 70 of us immediately took the street and started to march. At two points along the way, after BYP leadership heard that their members had been freed, they stopped the march and "asked" the other marchers: "Should we keep going (to the station) or turn around?" Each time, workers disagreed with the idea that they stop. On the second occasion, an older Black worker from South Shore came to the front and said, "Y'all asked us to march and we followed you. Ain't no turning back now, y'all can go back if you want."

PLP immediately went up to the worker and said he was right and that we would be following his leadership moving forward. We called on the crowd to keep going and most folks came with us, including the BYP100 members. This was another example of why we must have confidence in workers to make the right decisions. In some instances, PLP will have the opportunity to lead our class; in others, we will follow their lead.

In the days following Harith's murder, there have been more protests and demonstrations. On Sunday, July 15, PLP joined a demonstration, got out copies of CHALLENGE, and made contacts. The following day, more than 500 Black, Latin, white, and Asian workers and youth marched to protest both the murder of Augustus and the cops' brutal attack on the demonstrators. It was called by the Chicago Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression, a mass organization that some comrades are working in. The group's response to the torture and murderous history of the racist CPD

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OUR FIGHT

☆Progressive Labor Party (PLP) fights to destroy capitalism and the dictatorship of the capitalist class. We organize workers, soldiers and youth into a revolutionary movement for communism.

☆The dictatorship of the working class — communism—can provide a lasting solution to the disaster that is today's world for billions of people. This cannot be done through electoral politics, but requires a revolutionary movement and a mass Red Army led by PLP.

☆Worldwide capitalism, in its relentless drive for profit, inevitably leads to war, fascism, poverty, disease, starvation and environmental destruction. The capitalist class, through its state power — governments, armies, police, schools and culture — maintains a dictatorship over the world's workers. The capitalist dictatorship supports, and is supported by, the anti-working-class ideologies of racism, sexism, nationalism, individualism and religion.

☆While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim "communism is dead," capitalism is the real failure for billions worldwide. Capitalism returned to Russia and China because socialism retained many aspects of the profit system, like wages and privileges. Russia and China did not establish communism.

☆Communism means working collectively to build a worker-run society. We will abolish work for wages, money and profits. While capitalism needs unemployment, communism needs everyone to contribute and share in society's benefits and burdens.

☆Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of "race." Capitalism uses racism to super-exploit Black, Latin, Asian and indigenous workers, and to divide the entire working class.

☆Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women— sexism—and divisive gender roles created by the class society.

☆Communism means abolishing nations and nationalism. One international working class, one world, one Party.

☆Communism means that the minds of millions of workers must become free from religion's false promises, unscientific thinking and poisonous ideology. Communism will triumph when the masses of workers can use the science of dialectical materialism to understand, analyze and change the world to meet their needs and aspirations.

☆Communism means the Party leads every aspect of society. For this to work, millions of workers — eventually everyone — must become communist organizers. Join Us!

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WHO WRITES FOR CHALLENGE?

CHALLENGE is for the working class, produced by the working class. The fact that CHALLENGE/PLP articles are not signed grows from PLP's criticism of the cult of the individual in the former socialist Soviet Union and China. We do not want to encourage the possibility of building up a "following" around any particular individual.

While an article may be written by one person, the final version is based on collective discussion and criticism. Many times this collective discussion even precedes an individual's writing of an article.

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Editorial

Splits in U.S. ruling class shake EU, intensify global volatility

By all appearances, U.S. President Donald Trump's undisciplined approach to statecraft makes him seem like an incompetent rogue and possibly a tool of Russian interests. In essence, however, Trump's wrecking-ball trip to London and Brussels, followed by his bombshell "summit" with Russia's President Vladimir Putin represents something far more dangerous to the main-wing, imperialist finance capitalists of the U.S. ruling class.

With each passing week, Trump seems to be lining up more and more closely with the "small America" strategic vision pushed by a subordinate, domestically oriented, overtly racist wing of the U.S. bosses. Represented by billionaires like Robert Mercer and the Koch brothers, who are less reliant on overseas profiteering, these bosses are suspicious of multilateral entanglements with Western Europe, as embodied by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). With each passing week, Trump seems more and more under the sway of these isolationists—a highly volatile situation for a declining superpower already well on the road to fascism and World War III.

Trump's shift to treating Russia as an equal partner rather than a sworn enemy reflects the position of MIT's Barry Posen in his 2014 book, *Restraint*:

> *The United States should focus on a small number of threats, and approach those threats with subtlety and moderation…. It can do that because the United States is economically and militarily strong, well-endowed and well-defended by nature….It is not smart to spend energies transforming a recalcitrant world that we could spend renewing a United States that still needs some work.*

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the "MIT School" has argued against the strategy of "liberal hegemony," the "unipolar" dominance presented to U.S. imperialism when its main rival exited the world stage (theamericanconservative.com, 8/26/14). Until recently, this was a mostly ignored minority position inside the foreign policy establishment.

Now a U.S. president has embraced Posner's go-it-alone nationalism. Trump's stance implies a smaller, whiter military harboring open racism—like the military that has emerged since 9/11 (Washington Post, 8/17). With backing from the Russian-connected Mercer (mypalmbeachpost.com, 3/18) and Koch interests, Trump has built a loyal and mass racist, sexist, anti-immigrant movement that makes it risky for the big bosses to remove him from power too abruptly.

Shifting alliances

The split in the U.S. ruling class is leading capitalist rulers in Europe to look elsewhere for more reliable allies. In the days following Trump's scorched-earth visit to Europe, the European Union sent trade delegations to China and Japan, what may be early steps toward a potential reshuffling of the liberal world order and a diminished U.S. influence. While EU-Chinese relations continue to be tainted with mutual suspicion (aljazeera.com, 7/22), the Economic Partnership Agreement signed by the EU and Japan on July 17 has created the world's third largest free-trade community. The largest is the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which Trump pulled out of in January (aljazeera.com, 7/22).

On July 16, Trump doubled down by threatening the newest NATO member, tiny Montenegro, saying the U.S. shouldn't have to defend it if Montenegro's "aggressive" people go to war. As Russian imperialism works overtime to expand its influence in the Balkans, the place where World War I began and where the collapse of the USSR spawned U.S.-led war through the 1990s, Putin can only welcome Trump's posture.

US ruling class—splits intensify

Most troubling to main-wing U.S. imperialists, represented by both Democrats and leading Congressional Republicans, is the fact that Trump's brand of nationalism is gaining followers. An Axios poll found

What will be the outcome of the fall of the U.S.-led order?

that 79 percent of Republicans approved of Trump's performance with Putin, while 85 percent think the Robert Mueller investigation into Russian interference is a distraction (New York Times, 7/22). The Times editorial page likened Trump's base "to the members of a cult."

This brand of rhetoric in the leading main-wing mouthpiece could be a prelude to a domestic political conflict that could quickly turn brutal. Rasmussen polls show that fears of a new civil war are growing (washingtonexaminer.com, 6/18), with the larger group (59 percent) concerned that anti-Trump forces will turn to violence.

Meanwhile, the mass murderers of the FBI and CIA are presented by the main-wing media as defenders of truth, justice, and peace. This is the essence of nationalism, which misleads and terrifies working people into siding with a nation's rulers against their sister and brother workers in other countries.

Ex-CIA chief John Brennan, a willing executioner in Barack Obama's targeted assassination program (foreignpolicy.com, 9/12), tweeted that Trump's behavior was impeachable and "treasonous." Trump hit back by threatening to revoke Brennan's security clearance, which former officers retain for both private business reasons and to provide continuity (npr.org, 7/23/18). Such petty score-settling reveals the growing intensity of the fight between the "Fortress America" nationalists and the main-wing imperialists.

Reject nationalism, fight for communism

There have long been divisions among the bosses over the global reach of U.S. capitalism, from World War II through the conflicts in Korea and Vietnam. What's different now is that the main wing can no longer count on the U.S. president to do its bidding. If pushed too hard, the main-wing rulers will seek to bring Trump to heel—and to deal with his base as brutally as necessary. The U.S. Civil War reminds us that the bosses will kill one another—and many workers in the process—when their interests are threatened sharply enough.

In periods of crisis, the working class must remember that there are no good bosses, no lesser evils. Main-wing liberals—from Franklin Roosevelt through Obama—have the blood of tens of millions of workers on their hands. Though capitalists' appearances will vary, the antidote to awful capitalist leadership is not reformed capitalist leadership. The antidote is revolutionary working-class leadership—communist leadership.

When we act on this knowledge in the class struggle, we bring us that much closer a communist world. We create the basis for a society that operates on the communist principle: from each according to commitment, to each according to need. We advance a society without racism, sexism, money, or racist borders.

Help the international working class by reading, writing for, and distributing CHALLENGE. Communism is the only society that can deliver what the international working class needs, where the "free development of each is the condition for the free development of all."✪

Los ANGELES

PLP fights fascism, builds communists

LOS ANGELES, July 14—The Progressive Labor Party (PLP) strengthened its ranks against fascism at this year's Summer Project. The theme was "Fighting Fascism in all its Forms." A PLP Summer Project is an opportunity for comrades and friends from around the world to unite for intense political work in support of existing struggles to build communist understanding and PLP (see first-hand accounts on page 6).

We began with a lively orientation where we learned about the week ahead of us. Our first reading was the foreword to German communist Karl Billinger's *Fatherland* (1935). The foreword clearly states that we have two choices: following the road to fascism or fighting for communism. After team building activities and icebreakers, we made posters and chant sheets for the different antiracist actions planned for later in the week. We concluded our first day with a communist barbecue and card games. At every turn, collectivity was at work.

Study fascism

Every morning began with a study group. The topics were What is Fascism?, Racism and Fascism, and How to Fight Fascism. We aimed to improve our understanding of the world and what that means for our daily struggles on the job and in our mass organizations.

A small group also got a chance to learn more about writing and editing for CHALLENGE. CHALLENGE is the main way we share struggles in our mass organizations and our communist analysis of the world with our base, ourselves, and the rest of the international working class. We must share what we learned and fight for more comrades to write, edit, and translate for the paper.

We also had a movie showing and discussion of *Who is Dayani Cristal?* This documentary showed the difficult and sometimes deadly journey that migrant workers from Central America take to come to the United States.

Fight fascism

We supplemented our study of fascism by fighting the rising features of fascism in Los Angeles. This is mainly in the form of antiracist protests against the racist terror machinery that is the capitalist government: the Kops, the Kourts, and the Ku Klux Klan.

Our first action was a victory for the Anaheim 3, the antiracists who fought the Ku Klux Klan. PL'ers and other antiracist fighters rallied outside the courthouse and then packed the courts. In the courtroom we cheered for a victory that took two and half years of struggle to achieve (for more details see CHALLENGE, 7/25).

The following day, we rallied outside of District Attorney (DA) Jackie Lacey's office. She is the first woman and Black DA for Los Angeles County who was just re-elected. Lacey refuses to indict killer cops from the LAPD and LA County Sheriffs who have killed Ezell Ford, Omar Abrego, Brendan Glenn, CJ Snell, and Anthony Weber, just to name a few.

We protested in front of the detention center. Inside, detained workers beat their cell walls in solidarity. One held up a sign from her small window that read, "No ICE."

We called out DA Lacey and the capitalist criminal injustice system for its constant racist attacks on the working class, especially Black and Latin workers. During our rally we met some antiracists from the #OccupyICE encampment.

Enraged workers and youth protest in front of detention center

A picket for the Anaheim 3 in front of the court house

Our final rally was in front of the Metropolitan Detention Center where an #OccupyICE encampment has been in place for almost a month. Some of them joined our picket line. As we made speeches and chanted, detained workers beat their cell walls in solidarity. One held up a sign from her small window that read, "No ICE." That along with the honks of solidarity from workers driving by showed us that workers are open to communist ideas and are ready for more.

Build the Party

At all of these actions, we chanted, made speeches on the bullhorn, and distributed CHALLENGE. Some workers made bullhorn speeches for the first time. The actions, study groups, and recreation were planned collectively.

Summer Projects are a way PLP shows how communists live and work together. We strengthen our ranks, our communist analysis , and our fighting spirit, all to be carried back to the working class in local areas.

Organizing for a communist revolution is the only way we can defeat capitalism and its fascist, sexist, and racist system. Join PLP and the fight for communism.✪

Thousands shut down highway for gun reform—To end violence, shut down capitalism

CHICAGO, July 7—Today, 3,000 people shut down the main Chicago expressway, the Dan Ryan. They challenged the racist myth that Black and Latin youth responsible for high gun violence in their communities. It's actually mass unemployment and school closings, symtoms of capitalist inequality, that lead to gun violence.

Chicago Strong, a youth group tied to a local Catholic Church, led the march. It was an inspiring day for communists in PLP. We were present with our mass organizations and we distributed hundreds of CHALLENGEs.

Many workers who marched understand some of the underlying reasons why violence exists in our neighborhoods. They also understand the extreme racist nature of capitalism. What is unclear is how to solve these problems. This march, orchestrated by the Chicago ruling class, pushed for reforms that workers have been losing for decades.

Reformists expose their tie to pols and the state

Chicago Strong demans' include resources for our communities, national "common-sense gun laws," jobs, and schools. Its march was endorsed by Chicago's racist mayor, Rahm Emanuel. It is he who has led the charge to push ten of thousands of Black workers from Chicago. It is he who has shut down more than 50 schools and has attacked the Chicago Teachers' Union. It is he who blocks police reform that tries to make his rabid racist beasts (aka Chicago Police Department) more accountable.

But these facts didn't stop Reverend Michael Pfleger, the leader of the march, from linking arms with Eddie Johnson, chief of the racist, murderous CPD. Plenty of liberal politicians also posed for pictures. Sellout union leaders organized some of their members to march. There were many churches represented in the massive crowds; some came as far as 60 miles away. There were also students from Parkland, Florida, where a gunman killed 17 people at a high school in February. This spawned mass Democrat-led and mainly-white protests against gun violence.

Black and Latin youth feel the brunt of crisis

The liberal wing of the ruling class has attempted to turn the anti-gun violence protests into an attack on Black youth in Chicago. The main perpetrators of gun violence is still the police and the injustice system that protects them. Yet, the racist media focuses on gang violence.

In recent years the attacks on Black and Latin workers in Chicago has intensified. Mass unemployment and underemployment, and mass school closings accompanied with "War on Drugs" policies, have bred neighborhood violence. Youth unemployment for Black male workers ages 16 to 19 is over 80 percent, the group mostly impacted by gun violence here (Chicago Tribune 2018).

Another major factor of rising violence in neighborhoods stems from the city's attack on education through mass school closings. Remaining schools are overcrowded and depleted of therapists and counselors.

The mayor and his capitalist cronies have no solutions for young Black and Latin workers. As they turn former public school buildings into luxury lofts, it is clear our class has become disposable. No jobs, no functioning schools, just more police as the city still pushes forward to build its cop academy. It is our job as communists to make the connections between gun violence in our communities to this capitalist system. Prayers and "friendly" politicians cannot fix a problem that capitalism is solely responsible for.

We *cannot* let any gun law reform be another way to target and terrorize Black and Latin working-class youth!

Capitalism in crisis headed for more fascism and war

This march represented the main wing of the ruling class trying to mobilize workers to support liberal capitalism. They want us to trust the Democratic Party to solve the very problems that they created. That's why Pfleger, Jesse Jackson, and other misleaders fixate on worker-on-worker violence and embrace the racist CPD. We must shove these hypocrites out of the way. They will deliver us to the hands of the capitalist bosses who are hell bent on saving their tottering world empire on our backs.

They will try to discipline their class as well as us. One way or the other the rulers will need more soldiers to fight their enemies worldwide. Trump's gutter racism is a hard sell to mobilize Black and Latin soldiers. The lack of jobs makes enlisting a virtual economic draft. Later, if need be, a real draft may be needed. This is the future: war and fascism.

Capitalism is incapable of being reformed or fixed. It will always need racist terror and violence to rule. Chicago Strong's demands are a pipe dream meant to convince us that this deadly system has a future. But despite the misleadership present, this multiracial group of workers showed the working class's potential to unite and shut this system down. Join the revolutionary communist party, PLP!✪

Puerto Rico: Workers occupy school, resists bosses' state

The following report is from the Puerto Rico Brigade, where over 20 students and community college professors from the U.S. contributed their labor and their international solidarity to the working class devastated by Hurricane Maria. On their Brigade, the group met families occupying a school that was threatened with closure. (Also see individual accounts on page 6.)

PUERTO RICO, July 22—"Who has the power? Grandmothers have the power!" So spoke one of the grandmothers occupying a public school in Toa Baja. Parents and teachers have been camping out at the school daily to ensure that equipment is not removed from the school at night by the school board. Parents have been calling press conferences and organizing rallies to keep their neighborhood schools open.

But while the capitalists have been exposed for closing schools and "reassigning" teachers (to non-teaching "special jobs"), working-class communities have learned to rely on each other to rebuild and fight back. The struggle to fight for education is the prime evidence of working-class unity—students, teachers and parents repairing schools and organizing protests across the island to protest the capitalist agenda to sell the island piece meal at the expense of its youth and working class.

As the Brigade who volunteered this summer in Puerto Rico, we were able to participate and support the working-class fightback and occupations of local schools slated to be closed. Progressive Labor Party members brought the message of international solidarity and the need for revolution to teachers and families. Families were tremendously welcoming to PLP and its communist ideas.

'This is how capitalists treat our children, like animals.'

School building rented for a dollar

The failure of capitalism to meet the needs of the working class is on full display here. The much-hated Secretary of Education Julia Keheler (annual salary $250,000) is calling for the closure of 400 schools in two years. She blames low student enrollment when in reality, Keheler is working hand in glove with developers to take over Puerto Rico.

The policy of privatization presents a golden egg for these capitalists who are able to feed off public funds in the name of "austerity" (read: cutbacks). Last year, 179 public schools were shuttered and 150 more were closed from 2010 to 2015 (Huffington Post, 4/6).

The public schools are often in attractive locations for developers, who have close ties to the government. Some schools have already been told they will be closed to create "offices." Others are close to beach or tourist attractions. The Julia Burgos School in Carolina was shut down and then rented for $1/year to a financier who then reopened it as a private school. The mural dedicated to Puerto Rican writer Julia Burgos inside the school was immediately removed.

Finance capital bosses are descending on Puerto Rico like hawks.

> *There are big names among them: Goldman Sachs Group Inc. and Perella Weinberg Partners and TPG Capital. What's luring them is the opportunity to scoop up home loans and foreclosed properties for pennies on the dollar (Bloomberg, 7/14/17).*

School closure (and home foreclosures) is one of the many ways the barbarous bosses use a crisis as an opportunity for business schemes and to slash and burn any benefits the working class has

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Puerto Rico Occupation

gained through past fightbacks.

Racist Disregard

The massive closure of schools that will affect Latin youth also paves the wave for charter schools, which receive public funds but are privately operated. Law 85, recently enacted, dictates that 10 percent of Puerto Rico's schools should be charters. Charters here have high turnover, high segregation rates, and bad teaching conditions.

Education workers with the Federación de Maestras de Puerto Rico (FMPR) correctly blame the finance capital bosses. Billionaires like Bill Gates, Michael Bloomberg, Jonathan Sackler (family owner of big pharma Purdue Pharma) and the DeVos family foundation for pushing to cut any remaining benefits for the working class in favor of lining their own pockets. (Betsy DeVos is the current Secretary of Education).

We salute the fightback spirit of our working-class sisters and brothers in Puerto Rico, who have been leading massive fightbacks throughout the island. They exposed how the strategy of the school closings also aims to divide parents, by leaving some schools untouched and closing others.

Attack on disabled students

Many of the 400 schools up for closure have high percentages of students with disabilities. According to a U.S. Department of Education report, approximately 25 percent of students in Puerto Rico have one or more disabilities. Many of the schools targeted have excellent facilities for students with disabilities, according to their parents. Charter schools here are known for their refusal to accept students with disabilities

One example is an elementary school in the Toa Baja municipality, where eight people died in the flooding from last year's hurricanes. The town suffered the onslaught of sea surges and torrential rain. Levies from a nearby lagoon were opened to prevent them from breaking. The school survived intact with little damage and the neighborhood united to clean and prepare it for returning students.

A few months ago, the same school received notice they were on the list of closure. Parents and teachers are outraged at the Department of Education. The government is forcing children, 56 percent of whom have a disability, to a distant facility with fewer resources and staff. The new school didn't even have bathrooms for the preschool children. When parents protested, the department representative said children could use the floor mat as a bathroom. "Like an animal!" one parent angrily remarked. "This is how capitalists treat our children, like animals."

Same Struggle, Same Fight

The militancy of the working class here is clear and the potential to get involved in the class struggle is great. Teachers and students from various community colleges had the honor of supporting these school struggles. From the South Bronx to Toa Boja, workers struggles have no borders.✪

Rebel for Harith

Continued from page 1

is to demand an elected Civilian Police Accountability Council (CPAC). They say their goal is to give the community "control" over the police and their contract—yet another dead-end reform.

Since 1948, Chicago has had a long history of "civilian oversight" and "police accountability" boards that have consistently failed to stop—or even properly investigate—racist police murders. An elected CPAC would mean more politicians—the capitalist bosses' stooges—overseeing a ruling-class institution whose very purpose is to control and terrorize the working class.

At another rally that ended at the barbershop where Harith worked, a speaker called for the community to put its arms around Harith's family and to contribute toward funeral expenses. Again, hundreds of CHALLENGE's were distributed.

At the monthly police board meeting, Black police chief Eddie Johnson was confronted about Harith's murder. There was also a demonstration at the home of Mayor Rahm Emanuel, who has tried to pacify workers by asking them to "lower their voices and listen to other voices" (abc7chicago.com, 7/17).

But the anger among Black workers in Chicago goes far beyond this latest killing. They are rebelling against the devastation and dismantling of communities that are riddled by racist unemployment and racist school closings. There is only one solution for our class sisters and brothers: communist revolution!

Our Party must grow and become active in our communities as we fight to build a culture of multiracial working-class unity. We must denounce divisions based on nationalism, voting wards, gang lines, or race. We are fighting for an international working class that has yet to imagine its potential. We have a world to win!✪

On the job report

No safety net for workers under capitalism

NEW YORK CITY, July 25—As I began my training for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) as a track worker, there has been a lot of safety talk at orientation and training. The indoctrination has begun, and the first order of business is making sure that workers know safety is our responsibility, and ours alone.

The topic came up about our fallen MTA brother St. Clair Richards-Stephens who was murdered by dangerous working condition in March 2018. He was a track worker who tripped, grabbed a handrail that broke, and fell to his death. The company and the union both stuck to their lame response to questions about his death: "Well we don't know all the facts yet. This is why we say safety begins with you. But there's still an ongoing investigation. What we can say is that he was a big guy." They speak as if it were his fault that the wooden handrail didn't support his weight, rather than emphasize the fact that wooden handrails have been proven unreliable!

During the "safety training", the trainer informed us of lead paint in our work areas, wooden catwalks and handrails still in use. He described the many ways workers continue to get hurt by getting their fingers cut off, falling off elevated structures, or getting struck by trains. Yet, he claimed 90 percent of workers' injuries are caused by our actions and the other 10 percent are from working conditions. Of those 10 percent, he claimed, "The only time when working conditions become unsafe is through acts of nature, like storms."

At this point, I knew the instructor was full of it. He is paid to brainwash workers into believing injures are mainly caused by the workers and not the bosses that exploit them. I asked, "Couldn't we improve upon the unsafe working areas to make them more safe?"

He said, "But we are designed to fail being victims of probability." He began to use an exercise with numbers to prove his point, saying once you get used to something and it suddenly changes, you're unable to adapt before your mistake is made.

A co-worker defended the instructor, "We will never be able to completely ensure everyone's safety. Not even in a perfect world could we ensure everyone's safety, that's what he's trying to say!"

I disagreed: "It is possible to ensure everyone's safety! For example, getting a G.O. (general order) to shut down service on one track can prevent anyone from getting struck by a train, or we can get safety nets for those who work on elevated structures."

The instructor initially agreed, then he again parroted his boss's lie and said, "Safety is hard to control because humans are hard to fix."

I realized this wasn't an argument I could win. I approached my co-workers on break to ask them what they thought.

"I understand what he means but I'm too tired to really think about it," one worker said. He's onto something. That's another trouble the MTA puts us through. The training was from 3-11pm. The day before, our schedule was 7am-3pm. A recent training required us to work from 10 pm-6 am. Our schedules are in constant fluctuation, making us tired and less able to think critically. This jeopardizes us workers and the riders who depend on us for transportation.

I persisted in my point about ensuring the workers' safety. An individual may be flawed, but as a collective, we're strong. In factories in other countries like Russia and China where the workers took state power in the last century, workers were able to dramatically reduce injuries because profit wasn't the driving force of labor, necessity was. It's capitalism that is at fault 100 percent of the time! After my rant, my coworkers agreed. "True, true," one co-worker said.

It's hard struggling against the bosses' lies, especially when "the experts" present them. It's a long fight, and we won't win them all, but what's important is that we drop the seeds for others to find and pick up. Stay patient, brothers and sisters, for the workers are always listening to what we say, and to what we don't say. Stand tall! The fight continues.✪

LETTERS

We encourage all CHALLENGE readers to send in letters and articles about their experiences fighting the bosses worldwide.

Bushwick tenants fight against racist displacement

In the Bushwick neighborhood of Brooklyn (which is 65 percent Latin and 20 percent Black), tenants are fighting the Camber Property Group developers. They plan on building two nine-story buildings with 122 apartments. Only 27 would be "affordable" for families whose income is at least $ 51,000 per year. This development would eliminate existing tenants, a boxing club, a restaurant, a laundry and a parking lot used by workers at a nearby hospital.

On June 11, several Progressive Labor Party members participated along with members of community organizations in a local audience for the public regarding the development of this construction. The leaders of Local 32 BJ, the largest union of property services workers, spoke in favor because the new owners had promised maintenance for only 12 union members. Everyone was surprised that a union "ally" supported a project that would eliminate 50 jobs in the community.

PLP says that the working class should never allow us to be divided and confronted by capitalist opportunists and sold. We need to fight for more jobs for our class. The fight continues. PLP is being built gradually in the community organizations in which we participate. While the leadership of these groups demands reforms, in unison with the Democratic Party, PLP calls for communist revolution as the way to free our class from the chains of capitalism.

★★★★★

Police kills Black and white workers

The article about Juneteenth (CHALLENGE, 7/11) inadvertently errs in the statistics of workers killed by cops. It notes that Black workers are murdered disproportionately by the police "…accounting for 63 percent of those killed while comprising 13 percent of the population." The correct percentage of Black workers killed is 25 percent. White workers made up 40 percent of those killed.

This error tends to hide the need of both Black and white workers, and all workers to fight racism through multiracial unity.

Compared to their respective proportions of the population, Black workers had a 2.5 higher likelihood of being murdered by cops than white workers. While the proportions are outrageously racist, white workers, too, are killed in large numbers. Granted, the U.S. population is 62 percent white but understating their executions-by-cop obscures the vital need for multiracial unity.

The terrorist legacy of racist policing from the 17th to 19th century slave patrols results in the continuing disproportionate murders of Black workers. But it is crucial that all workers recognize our common enemy, the capitalist class, and not be deceived that only Black or Latin or indigenous workers are targeted.

The recognition of our common exploitation and oppression will encourage a united working-class movement to abolish this death-dealing capitalist system and erect a working-class-led communist system on its ashes.

★★★★★

Puerto Rico Brigade: Worker solidarity in action

Letters from Puerto Rico Brigade. See page 4

I participated in the Puerto Rico Solidarity Brigade with an energetic group of community college students to work with fighters in PR. I also reunited with veteran comrades who live there.

My partner, family, and friends donated generously. I reached out to many co-workers at my healthcare center and was encouraged that several donated. Interestingly, it was the lower-paid workers who were most generous. I was able to raise more than I ever had for a summer project. Inspired by this, and with some encouragement from a comrade, I approached some friends at our regular vacation area. Several were also generous. Once again, those who gave the most were the ones who had less disposable income.

When I told that same comrade who struggle with me, she reminded me of the words of Ma Joad in John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*, "If you're in trouble, or hurt or need—go to the poor people. They're the only ones that'll help—the only ones."

This lesson was further reinforced by what I experienced with the young students and workers involved in the project itself in PR. I was moved by how the power of our ideas resonated most powerfully with those who had experienced the most oppression by this system.

This has inspired me to have more confidence, that with a bolder approach in struggle, the Party can emerge stronger in this period of growing fascism.

★

I am one of the members of the Puerto Rico Brigade and the experience will always be with me. In some ways I've been changed. Now I feel the need to be more involved.

I wrote this the day before we flew out:

Something's happening to me. I am being changed.

The U.S. government is at its worst. The president of U.S. is morally deficient while he claims to be the most humane; inadequately educated while knowing all, a rapist, a racist, an honest liar, a parent willing rip a black or brown child from his parents arms.

We are living in a time when the mirror does not accurately reflect its images. It's a funhouse mirror. These mirrors have warped our perceptions of what we know and are actually living through: *The Hunger Games*. I'm not sure what to make of the turn in humanity.

Many have fallen short of what's kind and righteous. In many cases, they act opposite of society's best interest. I'm upset, but I don't feel helpless. I feel the need to speak out and stay prepared. Who else stays prepped? That's who I'm looking for. I need to be with others.

Thank you to the supporters and organizers for involving me in this heart-moving experience to help other workers. I have changed by what I witnessed in Puerto Rico; the spirit of Puerto Rico's workers.

I am also part of a larger family that kicked butt while in PR. I mean we did a lot and it was tangible. We fixed a roof and cleared acres of brush and downed trees. We visited a woman's shelter, delivering supplies to them. We marched for teachers' pensions and protested the closing of the public schools. We also interviewed locals to get the on the ground story and attended two PLP fundraisers. We bonded. I hope I can make the next one.

★★★★★

LA Project: fighting fascism

Letters from LA Project. See page 3

Another great PLP Summer Project! The focus of "Fighting Fascism in all its Forms" could not be more topical. Study groups helped us understand how fascism has many aspects—tightening up the ruling class in preparation for wider wars and vicious attacks on the working class to keep us divided and in line. We saw fascism in practice during a CHALLENGE sale in a mainly immigrant working-class neighborhood, and saw its devastation watching the movie *Who is Dayani Cristal?*

After a study group about ways to organize and fight back against fascism, we made plans to go protest at a local ICE detention center. We are learning a lot about putting theory into practice, to smash this deadly system.

★

This summer project allowed me to struggle with people who have nationalist or pro-U.S. ideas. One instance was this Black worker who was spewing anti-immigrant rhetoric and favored Trump's anti-immigrant deportations (to get jobs back). This woke me up to the fact that we have to win everyone to communism.

Sometimes we mistake fascism as this all-white clique, but it could turn into a multiracial fascist unity against immigrants. We have to show the working class that there will never be full employment until we have communism.

★

Reading and discussing *They Fought Back*, about the mass escape of prisoners from the Nazi death camp Sobibor, we found the keys to fighting fascism: communist leadership, discipline, secrecy, trust in the working class, and collective action.

★

Disseminating CHALLENGE is essential to what we do but Summer Projects give us a chance to do it with new comrades on a whole new level! My fellow Party member inspired me. When it's been a long, hectic day, it's tempting to be half-hearted about a newspaper sale. Such was the case in LA at Ralph's Grocery Store.

One enthusiastic teammate used his spirit to rally his group and spur them on when others wanted to quit. This same PL'er was undaunted when during that same sale he faced off nationalism. A customer said, in response to standing up against deportations, "man let them get out of here!"

"I don't know about that," our friend said, "I kind of think we'd do better to unite!"

After some dialogue the nationalist came around and agreed that identity politics benefitted the bosses and no one but the bosses.

★

I attended another inspiring PLP summer project. One night, we watched the film *Who is Dayani Cristal*, which was about a worker from Honduras who died trying to get into the United States. Retracing the steps that he took from his home to the United States, the film not only left me feeling angry, but it also educated me about the problem of workers dying in the desert in an attempt to get to the United States. The movie showed how the Clinton Administration contributed to this problem through its 1994 immigration laws and every administration since made the problem worse. This film made me want to go back to my city and continue the fight to smash all borders through communist revolution.

★★★★★

South Africa speech

Obama promotes U.S. imperialist order

Obama has a proposal for the Democratic Party and for the imperialist wing of the U.S. ruling class. He laid it out in a "lecture" to a crowd of 15,000 supporters in Johannesburg, South Africa on the 100th anniversary of Nelson Mandela's birth. Obama's plan involves stopping Trumpism (though Trump is never named) and restoring the liberal world order dominated by the U. S. rulers.

Obama starts by observing that in 1918 when Mandela was born colonialism was alive and well, with the great powers mobilizing mass racist sentiment in service of imperial expansion and rivalry. Of course, he overlooks the world-shaking Bolshevik Revolution where the communist-led working class took power in Russia and disrupted the imperialist world order.

It was this anti-imperialist, socialist revolution in October 1917 that inspired Mandela and many other communist and nationalist liberation movements in Africa and throughout the world. The racist Jim-Crow segregation and murderous exploitation of Black workers in the southern United States inspired no one.

Obama mentions these liberation movements as though they represent the continuing progress of capitalism and liberal democracy toward a wonderful world for all. Actually these movements represent some reforms that were rather quickly taken away by capitalist rulers. These liberation movements failed the workers. They succeeded for some local capitalists.

Racist hypocrite

So what is Obama's plan to improve life in Africa? His foundation is mentoring 200 young people from journalists, to small entrepreneurs to educational leaders. He does mention China as a full-grown rival, but says nothing about China's Silk Road plan that is transforming much of the infrastructure in Africa to align with China's imperialist needs. Obama's foundation stands little chance to stop China's economic dominance in Africa.

Further Obama does not mention that China, Russia and the U. S. are increasing their military presence in Africa. He failed to mention his military imperialist expansion on the continent, including drone bombings and drone bases, in Libya, Nigeria, Somalia, and Tunisia.

In reality Obama is proposing a political plan to make U. S. imperialism look good around the world as it prepares for more wars with its imperialist rivals.

Obama moves on to commit the gross and foul distortion of equating the collapse of the already capitalist Soviet Union in 1989 with the collapse of apartheid that same year. Both systems, he claims, amounted to an assault on individual human dignity. Yet apartheid, from the start, was dedicated to racial supremacy, while the collapse of the USSR ended the first attempt to building an egalitarian society in which hundreds of millions, if not billions worldwide, still yearn to live. It is precisely that society, communism that Obama is careful to reject in his effort to map out the road ahead.

Inclusive capitalism

Instead, he calls for "inclusive capitalism"—progressive taxation, public education, universal health care, and a role for organized labor.

Obama then focuses on the U. S. ruling class. They are still far too unpatriotic and they are running away with society's wealth. They have no sense of duty to their nation, no appetite for sacrifice. Yet he willfully refuses to acknowledge any role whatsoever his eight years in power played in further concentrating wealth in fewer hands coming out of the 2008 crisis. Obama's "inclusive capitalism" is a call for discipline of the bosses. He paints the rise of nationalism worldwide as a failure on the part of ruling classes to contain the alienation that runaway inequality has engendered. Divided societies cannot confront major adversaries. This is the great ruling class fear Obama articulates. This is a playbook for major war, war that mobilizes entire societies.

Obama's "inclusive capitalism" includes national borders, massive deportations, and immigrants assimilating. He quotes Mandela to promote all class unity: "[t]o make peace with an enemy, one must work with that enemy, and that enemy becomes one's partner."

Yet life for Black workers in South Africa is worse than ever.

This one line sums up a major error of the old communist movement. Working with the enemy means more capitalist misery for workers and South Africa is a prime example of that. As Democrats and people on the "left" call for our votes, we must stick to our guns, the long, difficult road to workers power, communism.✪

RED EYE ON THE NEWS . . .

Below are excerpts from mainstream newspapers that may be of use for our readers. Abbreviations: NYT=New York Times, GW=Guardian Weekly, LAT=Los Angeles Times

How post-recession capitalism works: Profits up, wages down

NYT, 7/14 — Corporate profits have rarely swept up a bigger share of the nation's wealth, and workers have rarely shared a smaller one….

…Since the recession ended in 2009, corporate profits have grown…6.5 percent….Banks like JP-Morgan Chase and Citigroup reported outsize double-digit earnings….

Since the century's start, labor's share of the nation's income has sunk to the lowest level in decades.

In 2000,…corporations pulled in 8.3 percent of the nation's total income in the form of profits….

Now…corporate profits account for 13.2 percent of the nation's income….

If workers' income had not shrunk, they would have had an additional…$3,400 each….

The recent tax overhaul has further pumped up corporate earnings. Promises…[of] higher wages have yet to materialize. Higher gas and medical care costs have eaten away at…most workers….

Trump, Obama, Clinton policies: profit over workers' health

NYT, 7/11 — The push by United States delegates to the World Health Organization to…scrap a…resolution meant to encourage breast-feeding [abetted]…tossing public health concerns aside to serve powerful business interests. The baby formula industry is worth $70 billion….

Trump's contention…that women need access to formula because of malnutrition defies both science and common sense…Breast milk is far more nutritious than formula….[and] has the potential to ward off diarrheal diseases and respiratory infections...prevalent in low-income countries….

Unethical marketing practices…[by] formula makers…have contributed to a decline in breastfeeding in low-income….Doubling that proportion could save hundreds of thousands of lives….

…United States trade representatives threatened…Colombia health officials'…efforts to cut prescription drug prices

Federal officials have proposed changes…that would…thwart other efforts to expand access to newly developed and urgently needed tuberculosis medications. Tuberculosis is still at epidemic levels in many low- and middle-income countries, claiming 1.7 million lives in 2016 alone….

This approach to public health [is]…an obvious bow to rich and powerful companies, disregard for the needs of people who are poor or sick or both and zero attention to potential long-term consequences….Previous administrations were just as guilty as the current one when it comes to drugs.

Both the Obama and Clinton administrations also sought to keep drug prices high in low-income countries — the former by preventing generic markets in India and elsewhere, and the latter by supporting policies that kept prices of H.I.V. medications much higher than they needed to be….

Should American officials prevail in the current case, the outcome:…People will suffer. Industry profits will not.

Foreclosures swamp Puerto Rican hurricane victims

NYT, 7/15 — The foreclosure machine…in Puerto Rico after the devastation caused by Hurricane Maria…is slowly cranking up again. Island residents who fell behind on their payments are facing creditors ranging from Wall Street banks to the federal government….

…Credit Swisse…and banks like Citigroup and…the United States Department of Agriculture… [have] begun to foreclose on delinquent borrowers….setting the stage for what housing advocates have feared could be a wave of home foreclosures….

"A lot of people are going to lose their homes…."

In some of the new foreclosure cases…homes were severely damaged….

…Life is hardly back to normal. Hurricane Maria…caused an estimated $90 billion in damage and may be responsible for more than 1,000 deaths….Blue tarps still serve as makeshift roofs on more than 50,000 homes….

The Federal Emergency Management Agency… has rejected about 60 percent of the assistance claims.

Profits primary: Electricity cut-off kills grandma

NYT, 7/14 — Newark [N.J.] — Linda Daniels had fallen behind on her electricity bills, her meter run up by medical equipment going around the clock….On July 3, her family pulled together $500 to pay down her debts, believing it would maintain her service.

Two days later, her electricity was shut off…. Temperatures…soared into the 90s. Ms Daniels' house was stifling, the air so stuffy…it was difficult to breathe. Even more serious, Ms. Daniels relied on an oxygen machine, and it required electricity.

Ms. Daniels, 68, had…congestive heart failure….

Over several hours that day…Ms. Daniels gasped for air. Her relatives…repeatedly called the power company, Public Service Electric and Gas, pleading for the electricity to be restored, only to be asked…to stop calling….By later that afternoon, Ms. Daniels was dead from heart failure….

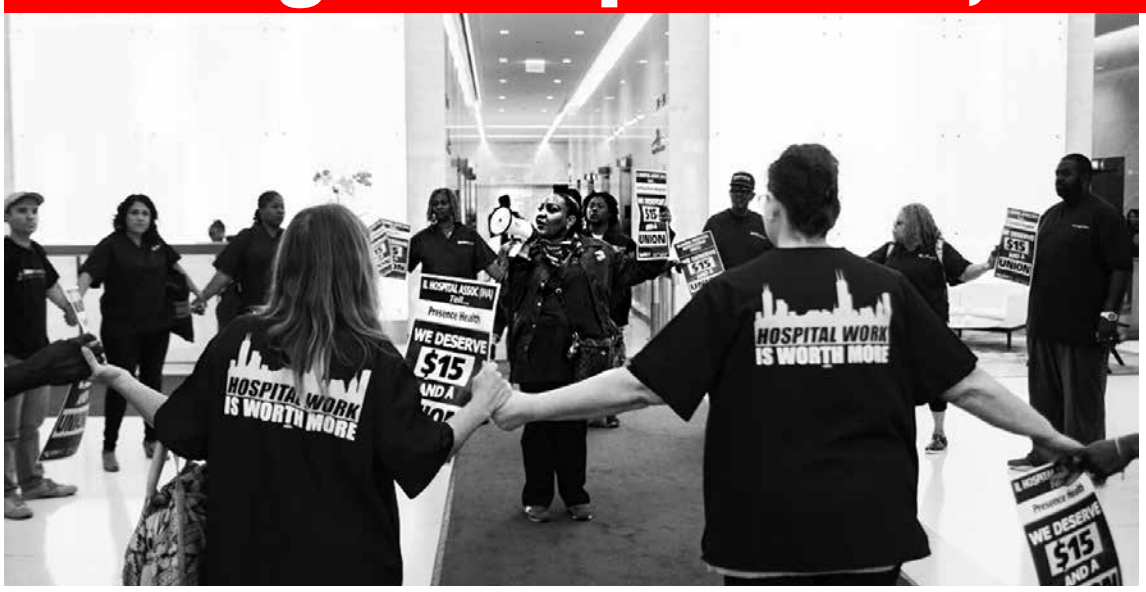
In the panicked calls the family made on July 5, Ms. Washington [a daughter] said the company's representatives were "being money-crazed" and… showed no empathy or willingness to help….

Ms. Daniels,… [a retired] data entry clerk…. lost her vision in her 50s….

She wrote children's books, with her daughter sitting at a computer typing her words.

Working class under attack

Chicago's capitalism, a health hazard



Chicago, July 23—hospital workers disrupt traffic to protest bad working conditions.

As sharpening inter-imperialist rivalry leads to larger wars and fascism, the U.S. capitalist rulers are trying to solve the crisis of their failing profit system by attacking the working class. Over the next several issues of CHALLENGE, we will be writing about how these attacks are affecting workers—and how a communist-led revolutionary movement can fight back.

Capitalism will never be able to guarantee an acceptable level of health for the overwhelming majority of the working class. By transforming essential medical services like prescription drugs and surgery into commodities to buy and sell for profit, the capitalist bosses who run healthcare ensure that if workers and their families can't pay, disease, disability, and death are the common consequences.

The city of Chicago, despite having a booming health care industry valued close to $70 billion, has led the way in using racist attacks as the cutting edge to decrease the overall health of workers across the region. From racist police murder to the closure of health care facilities that serve mostly Black and immigrant workers, the city has mirrored the overall trend of capitalism in denying even a remotely healthy existence to an increasing number of our class.

This will continue to be the harsh reality until the international working masses, led by the Progressive Labor Party, overthrow the profit system through violent revolution and establish a worker-led communist society in its place. Only then will workers live in a world not only where health care access is guaranteed for all, but where the social problems that lead to racist and sexist health outcomes are eradicated through collectivity and organizing the masses.

Racist capitalist unemployment leads to death, mental illness

The racism inherent under capitalism, which is used by the bosses to divide workers so that they can maximize profit, inevitably leads to racist inequalities in health. Conservative estimates place the unemployment rate for Black men between the ages of 20-24 in Chicago to be nearly 40 percent (Chicago Tribune, 5/12). This scarcity of jobs funnels thousands of Black youth into a street economy, exposing them to inter-gang violence. As of July 15, over 271 people have been killed and over 1,500 have been shot in the city (Chicago Tribune, 7/16).

Beyond just the physical and emotional toll that this violence inflicts on the immediate victim, is the ripple effect in mental health that occurs in the Black and Latin communities of the city where the majority of the shootings occur. A study sample of Black women in a neighborhood on the city's south side showed a rate of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) nearing 60 percent. A significant portion of those diagnosed with PTSD in the study reported having a loved one directly impacted by physical violence (Chicago Magazine, 12/16/16). This violence stems ultimately from capitalism and its government, often directly in the case of police shootings.

For those workers who would hope to access some mental health resources to help deal with this type of intense strain that capitalism causes, liberal racist Mayor Rahm Emanuel and other Democratic Party city bosses ensured years ago that very few if any are available to those working-class communities most directly affected. The Hill reports:

> *Illinois cut $113.7 million in funding for mental health services from 2009 to 2012, which resulted in closing two inpatient facilities, six of twelve mental health clinics and several community health agencies. Four of the six agencies that closed were on the South and West sides of the city, where the majority of violence occurs, and where such services are desperately needed (6/26/17).*

Instead of mental health clinics, more and more workers are funneled into Cook County Jail, the fourth largest jail in the U.S., where at least one-third of the inmates have a diagnosed mental illness (WTTW, 11/2/17).

Bosses shred safety net, attack immigrant workers

The Cook County Health and Hospitals System, a city-run network that provides medical services to the city's working class, uninsured/underinsured, and undocumented workers and their families, proposed cuts to the 2018 budget in upwards of $10 million dollars (Chicago Sun-Times, 11/17/17). These cuts were deemed "necessary" by the racist city bosses, who state they need to cover a $200 million dollar deficit after the county's anti-worker, sweetened beverage tax scheme crashed and burned at the end of last year (See CHALLENGE, 10/27/17).

The racist CEOs of the city's "safety net" hospitals, such as Dr. Jay Shannon of Stroger Hospital and Karen Teitelbaum of Mount Sinai Hospital, have the nerve to make statements about how much they "care" about undocumented workers in press releases. Meanwhile, they attack those very same workers by cutting services that they claim are not "cost-effective," like when both hospitals shuttered their inpatient pediatrics units in 2017. Abrupt changes such as these force immigrant workers to lose familiar health care providers as well as travel farther distances to private healthcare systems which are less likely to accept insurance programs such as Medicaid.

This lack of access can make the difference of life and death for workers who face worsening health problems related to the ongoing threat of raids and arrests via the massive deportation apparatus of the capitalist ruling class. Even though the Chicago liberal bosses tout the status of "sanctuary city," this flimsy designation hasn't protected scores of the undocumented from the reality of deportation, including over 150 immigrant workers who were rounded up by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) over a six-day period in May (Washington Post, 5/29).

The heightened sense of anxiety and stress of living under these fascist conditions not only contributes to an increased incidence of chronic conditions such as hypertension and mental illness; it also decreases the likelihood that immigrant workers will feel comfortable going to a medical facility and voluntarily offering up personal information for fear that it will be used by authorities for deportation.

Such is the nature of this racist, sexist profit system: making it nearly as impossible for our class to live healthily as it is to seek treatment. As communists in PLP, we say that a system that can't guarantee healthcare for workers doesn't deserve to exist!

Building communist revolution essential to workers' health

Although the overall trend of healthcare access and health outcomes, in Chicago and beyond, reflects growing racist inequality for our class, workers and students in the city continue to challenge the bosses and their system through militant fightback. A collective of community activists, mostly Black youth from the city's south side, led a protracted campaign over recent years that forced the bosses to re-open a trauma center at the University of Chicago. University public health students have published research and organized teach-ins and rallies around racist police violence as a public health crisis. Hospital workers throughout the greater city area have built the fight through their healthcare unions to demand safer staffing, higher wages, and affordable health insurance plans from the hospital bosses. Comrades from PLP have been in the thick of many of these struggles, offering leadership and a communist political analysis whenever possible.

The phenomenal gains in worker life expectancy, infant and mother mortality, and public health that occurred after the Russian and Chinese revolutionaries won state power must continue to inspire us to build these struggles against the capitalists and their deadly system. The concept of health was no longer individualized with a price tag; it was understood as something not to be connected to money and profit, but rather the experience of collective development and struggle. When millions and millions of workers are won again to this truly revolutionary outlook, our future will be very healthy indeed.✪

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